



Low-Cost Tips for Reducing Home Heating and Cooling Costs

Energy Center fact sheet

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Homeowners can significantly reduce their utility bills by making simple, low-cost home improvements, as described below. For more tips, visit the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Savers Web site at www.energysavers.gov.

Keeping Out the Elements

- Caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows that leak air.
- Caulk and seal air leaks where ducting, plumbing, light fixtures or electrical wiring penetrates through exterior walls, floors and ceilings.
- Install rubber gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on exterior walls.
- As a less costly and less permanent alternative, you can use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames during the cold winter months. Remember, the plastic must be sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.
- During cold-weather months, keep the draperies and shades on your south-facing windows open during the day to allow sunlight to enter your home. Keep these draperies and shades closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows. In warm-weather months, keep the window coverings closed during the day to prevent solar gain.
- **WARNING:** Prior to reducing the air infiltration of a home, all gas burning appliances need to be checked for proper burner operation and the furnace heat exchanger needs to be tested for leaks. Failure to do so may cause elevated carbon monoxide levels in the home.

Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning

- For gas appliances, look for blue flames; yellow flames indicate the gas is burning inefficiently and an adjustment may be needed. Consult your manufacturer or your local utility.
- Replace or clean furnace air filter(s) once a month. Have your furnace serviced before each heating season to ensure it is operating safely and efficiently.
- Manually turn your thermostat down to the lowest comfortable setting. Use thermostat setback strategies when the home is unoccupied or when occupants are sleeping. (Setback may not be appropriate with heat pumps. Check with the equipment supplier or your service company).
- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes.
- Use kitchen, bath and other ventilating fans wisely; in just 1 hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warmed or cooled air. Turn fans off as soon as they have done the job.
- Keep your fireplace damper closed tightly when not in use.



Water

- Repair leaky faucets promptly; a leaky faucet wastes gallons of water in a short period.
- Install water-saving showerheads and faucet aerators.
- Lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120 degrees.
- Wrap your water heater with an insulated jacket. On electric water heaters be careful not to cover the thermostat. On gas water heaters be careful not to cover the water heater's top, bottom, thermostat, or burner compartment; when in doubt, get professional help.

Lighting

- Turn off the lights in any room you're not using.
- Install compact fluorescent bulbs in place of existing incandescent bulbs where practical and when operation is more than two hours per day.
- Use task lighting; instead of brightly lighting an entire room, focus the light where you need it.

Appliances

- Move your refrigerator out from the wall and vacuum its condenser coils once a year. Your refrigerator will run for shorter periods with clean coils.
- Don't keep your refrigerator or freezer too cold. Recommended temperatures are 37° to 40°F for the fresh food compartment of the refrigerator and 5°F for the freezer section. If you have a separate freezer for long-term storage, it should be kept at 0°F.
- When not in use, turn off televisions, stereos and computers. ENERGY STAR ®-labeled computers come with power management features that "power down" after a user-specified period of inactivity.

For More Information Contact

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